

**To:** Coleman, Sam[Coleman.Sam@epa.gov]; Curry, Ron[Curry.Ron@epa.gov]  
**Cc:** Gray, David[gray.david@epa.gov]; Edlund, Carl[Edlund.Carl@epa.gov]; Flynn, Ryan, NMENV[Ryan.Flynn@state.nm.us]  
**From:** Flynn, Ryan, NMENV  
**Sent:** Fri 8/7/2015 4:24:08 AM  
**Subject:** RE: EOC Spot Report: Region 8, Abandoned Mine Release into Animas River; San Juan County, CO

Ron and Sam,

As I mentioned, we are extremely upset with EPA's failure to notify us about the release until late this morning even though the release occurred yesterday at approximately 10:40 AM. We first learned of the release at 9:30 AM this morning from an official with the Southern Ute Tribe. I will appreciate if you will pass along our frustration about the lack of notice to senior management at Headquarters as this is unacceptable.

Based on the story I just read in the Durango Herald, I understand EPA will have the results of some of the samples it took available tomorrow morning. We would like any and all information EPA has regarding the contaminants contained in the release as soon as possible. Any other information EPA has gathered over the past 24 hours also needs to be shared with us immediately so we can assess the situation for ourselves. I honestly do not understand some of the statements being made by EPA officials in Colorado regarding the release not posing a major problem to wildlife given the lack of information available about the release at this point. According to the story in the Durango Herald, **"The EPA downplayed the potential effects on aquatic life, saying there is long-standing water-quality impairment issues associated with heavy metals in Cement Creek and upper portions of the Animas River. As a result, there are no fish populations in the Cement Creek watershed, and fish populations have historically been impaired for several miles downstream of Silverton in the Animas River."**

While EPA may not be concerned about the Animas in Colorado, we are extremely concerned about impacts to the river in New Mexico and would not feel comfortable telling the public things are OK because the river is already in bad shape, as EPA seems to be doing in Colorado.

Please provide us with any information as soon as it is available.

Yours truly,

Ryan Flynn

Secretary of Environment

**From:** Coleman, Sam [mailto:Coleman.Sam@epa.gov]

**Sent:** Thursday, August 6, 2015 3:04 PM

**To:** Flynn, Ryan, NMENV; Curry, Ron

**Cc:** Gray, David; Edlund, Carl

**Subject:** FW: EOC Spot Report: Region 8, Abandoned Mine Release into Animas River; San Juan County, CO

Just out from R8.

**Samuel Coleman, P.E.,**

**Deputy Regional Administrator**

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**214.665.2100**

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**From:** Eoc, Epahq

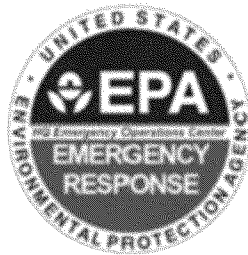
**Sent:** Thursday, August 06, 2015 3:48 PM

**Subject:** EOC Spot Report: Region 8, Abandoned Mine Release into Animas River; San Juan

County, CO

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## **EOC Spot Report: Region 8, Abandoned Mine Release into Animas River; San Juan County, CO**

**US Environmental Protection Agency**

**Report as of 1630 EDT on 08/06/2015**

**Overview:** At around 10:00 a.m. on August 5th, an EPA and Colorado State Division of Reclamation Mining and Safety team was working to investigate and address contamination at the abandoned Gold King Mine in San Juan County, CO. This work unexpectedly triggered a large release of mine wastewater into the upper portions of Cement Creek. Initial estimates indicate that the release is approximately one million gallons that was held behind unconsolidated debris near an abandoned mine portal. There were several workers at the site at the time of the breach and all were unharmed.

The acidic mine water associated with this release contains high levels of sediment and metals. EPA teams are conducting sampling and visual observations today and will be monitoring river conditions over the next several days. EPA recommends that recreational users of the Animas River avoid contact with or use of the river until the pulse of mine water passes.

**State, Local and other Federal Agency Actions:** San Juan County officials are engaged in the response to the release. State officials are also on scene.

**EPA Actions:** A R8 OSC met with San Juan County leaders to discuss the release into the Animas River. R8 requested support from EPA's Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology (ASPECT) aircraft and the plane is in route to collect photographic information to response officials.

**Media Interest:** Low

<http://www.durangoherald.com/article/20150806/NEWS01/150809765/Mine-waste-in-Animas-River-nears-Durango->

[http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci\\_28595759/animas-river-contaminated-by-1-million-gallons-contaminated](http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_28595759/animas-river-contaminated-by-1-million-gallons-contaminated)

**The HQ EOC will continue to monitor and provided updates as needed.**

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